

**REFLECTION - JANUARY 1, 2016**  
**WORLD DAY OF PEACE**  
**BY Sr. Diane Przyborowski**

Isaiah 32:15-18    Philippians 4:6-9    John 15:9-12

A very Blessed New Year to each of you! Today the first day of this new year, we celebrate world day of peace. PEACE! Today? In the world? Really? In Isaiah we hear God say, "My people will abide in a peaceful environment, with secure dwellings, quiet places for rest." Really? I see a Syrian refugee teenager giving birth to her baby in a ditch. Where is her dwelling, much less secure dwelling? Where is her peaceful environment? God says through Isaiah "It is justice that will bring us peace – only justice will produce quietness and lasting security." What is justice? We each have our own ideas. Is it just to condemn all Muslims because there are some who are killing and terrorizing in the name of Allah?

At first glance it looks like there is anything but peace in our world. We are inundated with images and sounds of violence and fear all around us....just turn on the television, surf the Internet, listen to the news in any of its many forms. But that's only part of our story. Unfortunately the good news stories do not get played for us with as much fanfare and hype as those destructive stories. Peace....what is it? Is Christ's peace so deeply planted in our hearts that we can venture to feel the pain behind all the violence and terror on a global or domestic scale? And can we look and not turn away in indifference or smugness or discrimination and say that is someone else's problem. Or let the politicians solve it? Really?

The gospel today paraphrased by myself speaks of Jesus saying to us: "Abide in my love.....stay in my love.....be in my love. This is so important that I make it my commandment. Love one another as have loved you. I mean LOVE one another and that means everyone. No distinctions, no discriminations, no being picky and choosy. Just love..."

Jesus continues, "That means loving the person who just hurt your feelings or ignored your ideas or snapped at you or cut in front of your car or the line in the grocery store, or didn't take the garbage out, or is lazy or you don't agree with or that political candidate screaming to the crowds..... Everyone means everyone."

And we respond: "How can I do this? It is too hard. It's easier to look away from the person in need or pretend I didn't just hear their hidden plea for help. How can I do this? If I am so totally loved by God, how can I **not** respond through loving?"

Pope Francis once again inspires us to pay attention to the needs of the times and be about loving. This Jubilee year which began on December 8<sup>th</sup> is Pope Francis' call to be people of Mercy. That is how he is framing the way to bring peace in the world. If everyone would somehow consciously practice mercy...be mercy, oh what a peace-filled world would exist. Imagine that with each act of mercy, peace is spreading like a mighty river flowing out and producing a garden of indescribable beauty and loveliness. Or imagine a world in which there is no distinction between the one giving and the one receiving mercy. Mercy would ignite each heart it touches and spread that peace to the next heart and the next heart and the next heart. Mercy, peace, love all flowing from the very heart of God!

Lives of mercy aren't easy. We don't do this alone. We do this in community and in deep union with Christ. We pray for the strength to be open-hearted, to heed the call to be people of mercy. We deepen our prayer life that we may respond to our God and neighbor genuinely and open-heartedly because "God who is mighty has done great things for us.....God has received Israel his servant being mindful of divine mercy." (We have that reminder right here in our chapel window.)

The Church shares with us a list of corporal (body) and spiritual works of mercy. These are but an idea list. You may be called to be a person of mercy in a different or creative way. I have added a new possibility to each section: care for Mother Earth and consciously pray for peace. You may want to add your own work of mercy that inspires you to be a person of mercy. Listen now with an open heart to how God is calling you.

#### **Corporal Works of Mercy**

- feed the hungry
- give drink to the thirsty
- clothe the naked
- shelter the homeless
- visit the sick
- visit the imprisoned
- bury the dead
- care for Mother Earth

#### **Spiritual Works of Mercy**

- counsel the doubtful
- instruct the ignorant
- admonish sinners
- comfort the afflicted
- forgive offenses
- bear wrongs patiently
- pray for the living and the dead
- consciously pray for peace

This is not a check list but an idea list. Did one work of mercy call your name?

Since this is the time of year for resolutions, consider taking one work of mercy for your 2016 resolution of mercy. Might you consider beginning with mercy toward yourself?

Let us bring peace to the world through one work of mercy after another. Let this Jubilee Year of Mercy be an instrument of peace and joy for our world.

A very blessed and joyful 2016 to you!